

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

Hearing Date: March 11, 2021 8:00 AM

Printed on: March 12, 2021 2:56 PM

COMMENTS FOR: HB 22

---

Kimberly Young

Election Integrity Project of Nueces County

Corpus Christi, TX

We have handicapped parking spaces for drive-up voters in Nueces County already. Perhaps smaller counties don't have this, but we highly endorse this as a way to get the elderly and otherwise non-mobile citizens to vote. My significant other is elderly and handicapped and we drive up to the Church where we are to vote, I go inside and tell an official that he's in the car, and she/he takes a tablet out and stays with him while he's voting. Without that ability to do it in person, he would have to mail in his ballot - which we want to avoid.

---

Janet Mattern

Self

Fort Worth, TX

I support curbside voting. As an election worker who has performed curbside voting, this bill should be amended so that each county provides a mobile voting unit that is designed for curbside voting and that the units and ballots can be used in rainy weather and with direct sun, and that the mobile unit is able to be maneuvered easily by a single clerk.

---

Lindy Olsen

Self / school counselor

Sherman, TX

I am an election judge in Grayson County and it would be very helpful to reserve parking spaces for those who need to utilize curbside voting.

---

Allen Minter, Mr

Self

Cushing, TX

My mother had multiple sclerosis, and I have vivid memories of watching her struggle. Thankfully we lived in a small, close-knit community. People did what they could to help her, and our family in general, feel included. Sometimes that meant building ramps (before the ADA was put into law), and sometimes that meant we would pick her up, wheelchair and all, and carry her up the steps.

Not everyone has that. It is our responsibility to take care of those around us. How can we claim to be a free nation, or a Christian nation, if we don't guarantee essential freedoms like voting to those with physical challenges?

---

Karla Bevel

Bevel

Greenville, TX, TX

Many people cannot walk or stand in line for an extended period and this is the LEAST we can do for our fellow Texans. Do the right thing, make voting easier not hard. It is our right as citizens to have accessibility to the polls.

---

Corlie Jackson

TXLege, LWV, Texas Organizing Project

Galveston, TX

I was a bipartisan poll monitor and or precinct chair for the last four national elections<2008,2012,2016,2020>during that time I observed a real access 'disconnect' happening for handicapped or COVID cautious trying to vote. There were no visible signs, phone numbers or instructions at the polling sites on the Galveston island or the mainland. If you wanted to participate in curbside voting , you were required to bring an additional person with you who could get out of the car and go in to the polling place and find someone who knew what/how/was available and know how to work the machine. It proved to be a nightmare for many. Please help create real access by mandating signs and dedicated mobile locations and assistants to help us participate in curbside.

---

Anthony Padilla

ARA

Buda, TX

As a Senior concerned for making sure we have easy access to voter participation on all voting elections, I am in support of these bills HB 22 and HB 478 as I know that Nearly 3 million voters with disabilities in Texas need more functional and clear access to curbside voting and there are bills moving through the state legislature aiming to improve that process.

---

Peggy Harwood

self

Fort Worth, TX

I support curbside voting to accommodate citizens with mobility challenges who otherwise would not be able to physically enter a polling place to vote. Texas counties need to have signs that explain how voters can ask for this assistance. State and county elections websites also need to explain this as an option and provide instructions on how to arrange for curbside voting.

---

Teresa Perez-Wiseley

Retired

Austin, TX

I would like to be able to help someone who wants to actually vote at a polling place. Many of those sites have very long lines or are sites that are difficult to walk into.

---

Sandra Kelly

self

Denton, TX

Democracy is served by increased participation voters, not restricted legislation and access. 1. Expand mail in voting to all - no restrictions. Many need to vote by mail but do not fit within the restrictions currently set out by the state of Texas. This is discriminatory. 2. Expand early voting days / times and help to fund them. Work schedules, child care, illnesses, any number of circumstances can affect ability to vote on certain dates and times. Long lines are unacceptable and are an undue burden. Voting should not be made more difficult. 3. Expand the number of polling locations. Texas has less than 750 polling locations since 2012 despite the increase in eligible voters. This is unacceptable. Increase polling locations and assist with funding. 4. INCREASE drop off locations for mail in ballots. What happened in Nov of 2020 was a travesty and looks very much like an attempt to disenfranchise voters. 5. Increase access to voter registration including automatic registration with drivers license. Voter fraud is virtually nonexistent and is an excuse to limit access. If voter fraud were an issue - then line it out. Dates, times, numbers, incident. Put out a bullet point document of instances of voter fraud in Texas - bullet points being date, time # of votes affected, party affiliation, etc. Continuing to speak of voter fraud in vague generalizations with no facts or details is again, unacceptable. Do the right thing for Texas. Stop restrictive actions.

---

Valerie Street

Texas Progressive Action Network

Austin, TX

Texas Progressive Action Network supports legislation with a goal of requiring clear outdoor signage and clearly marked designated parking spots for curbside voting so as to provide better access for individuals who need to request this method of voting. Additionally, we know that it is important that there be a means for voters to notify the polling place workers inside that they require assistance, be it a phone number to call or a call button that alerts staff and volunteers inside that a Texas voter needs their help.

Millions of Texans with disabilities have long had to work their way through a challenging process to cast a ballot even before the onslaught of a global pandemic. While Texas counties are all supposed to offer curbside voting to those who need it, the preparation and ability to actually manage it across all counties is far from equal and many voters are simply not aware of what their options are in those instances. Working towards making this process more functional and clear for polling place workers and voters is helpful for all and we thank lawmakers for their efforts in this matter.

---

Bianca Avery

Campus Vote Project

Dallas, TX

I write as the Texas State Coordinator for Fair Elections Center's Campus Vote Project. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation. The Center's Campus Vote Project educates and engages young voters on voting rights issues, working to institutionalize civic engagement and voting at university and college campuses, including in Texas. I write in support of HB22, as well as to suggest an amendment that would ensure election officials retain flexibility in making polling places accessible.

One in 4 eligible voters has, or lives with a household member who has, a disability. Though fewer voters with disabilities reported issues casting their ballots in 2020 than in 2012, the Election Assistance Commission still found that "the overall rate of difficulties for voters with disabilities in 2020 is almost twice the rate for voters without disabilities." The Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) documented some of these difficulties in its own report on curbside voting and made several recommendations for improving this option for qualifying voters, including increasing signage, recruiting and training more volunteers to conduct curbside voting, and creating a hotline so that voters can alert poll workers to their presence and request assistance in English, Spanish, and other commonly spoken languages in the community.

HB22 addresses some of the issues raised in TCRP's report. However, the requirement that each polling place reserve at least two "parking spaces" for curbside voting could potentially result in polling places actually becoming less accessible. Many people

with disabilities lack personal transportation and rely on public transportation, and therefore may not be able to safely use these parking spaces. Polling places in more urban areas and on school campuses may not have sufficient dedicated parking spaces to comply with HB22, potentially resulting in the closures of those polling locations and forcing voters to travel greater distances to vote. Therefore, we suggest amending the bill to require election officials to reserve an area sufficient to accommodate at least two standard-sized vehicles for curbside voting, and that the route to this area itself be physically accessible to poll workers with disabilities and adequate for the movement and stationing of voting equipment. These changes would improve curbside voting while giving election officials greater flexibility in making polling places more accessible. The Center also encourages amendments to implement TCRP's remaining recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration and for allowing Fair Elections Center to share its expertise on this matter. Please do not hesitate to be in touch at the provided email address or telephone number should you have any questions.

---

Bianca Avery  
Campus Vote Project  
Dallas, TX

I write as the Texas State Coordinator for Fair Elections Center's Campus Vote Project. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation. The Center's Campus Vote Project educates and engages young voters on voting rights issues, working to institutionalize civic engagement and voting at university and college campuses, including in Texas. I write in support of HB22, as well as to suggest an amendment that would ensure election officials retain flexibility in making polling places accessible.

One in 4 eligible voters has, or lives with a household member who has, a disability. Though fewer voters with disabilities reported issues casting their ballots in 2020 than in 2012, the Election Assistance Commission still found that "the overall rate of difficulties for voters with disabilities in 2020 is almost twice the rate for voters without disabilities." The Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) documented some of these difficulties in its own report on curbside voting and made several recommendations for improving this option for qualifying voters, including increasing signage, recruiting and training more volunteers to conduct curbside voting, and creating a hotline so that voters can alert poll workers to their presence and request assistance in English, Spanish, and other commonly spoken languages in the community.

HB22 addresses some of the issues raised in TCRP's report. However, the requirement that each polling place reserve at least two "parking spaces" for curbside voting could potentially result in polling places actually becoming less accessible. Many people with disabilities lack personal transportation and rely on public transportation, and therefore may not be able to safely use these parking spaces. Polling places in more urban areas and on school campuses may not have sufficient dedicated parking spaces to comply with HB22, potentially resulting in the closures of those polling locations and forcing voters to travel greater distances to vote. Therefore, we suggest amending the bill to require election officials to reserve an area sufficient to accommodate at least two standard-sized vehicles for curbside voting, and that the route to this area itself be physically accessible to poll workers with disabilities and adequate for the movement and stationing of voting equipment. These changes would improve curbside voting while giving election officials greater flexibility in making polling places more accessible. The Center also encourages amendments to implement TCRP's remaining recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration and for allowing Fair Elections Center to share its expertise on this matter. Please do not hesitate to be in touch at the provided email address or telephone number should you have any questions.

---

Larry Ringler  
self - retired  
Portland, TX

I support this bill as a way to ensure that the elderly/impaired voters are able to cast their ballot.

---

Aaron Ramirez

Nueces

Corpus Christi, TX

I believe most polling places have handicap accessible parking areas making this easier to do, and maintain a fair legal vote is being cast. Risking mail in ballots has played to be a bad deal. Let's work to keep integrity in our election process.

---

Cinde Weatherby, LWVTX Voting Rights/Election Law Ch.

League of Women Voters of Texas

Austin, TX

These comments are provided on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas ?IN SUPPORT OF HB 22.? Thank you for allowing us to share the LWVTX position on this bill.

LWVTX encourages all voters with disabilities to vote in every election. We call for providing resources to accommodate these voters whether they choose to enter the polling place, access the ballot by mail, or as provided in HB 22, vote in a vehicle parked close to the polling place.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data indicate that 25.6 percent of adults in Texas have a disability. Some individuals who have a disability not allowing them to enter the polling place without personal assistance or the likelihood of injuring their health, choose to go to the polling place like many other Texas voters. Providing a sign featuring a telephone number that is clearly readable from their vehicle is critical to them.

In June 2020, LWVTX hosted a webinar in partnership with REV UP Texas, the Texas Secretary of State's office and Disability Rights Texas to address the needs of voters with disabilities. Visible signage was noted by attendees as a priority. With the steady increase of these voters, at least two spaces is definitely better than one. Please favorably consider passage of HB 22.

Especially in the 77 counties participating in the countywide polling place program, ?we request that you not support any amendment that would eliminate heavily used polling places on the basis that they cannot provide close parking spaces for curbside voting.

---

Julie Kellogg

self, self employed insurance sales

Corpus Christi, TX

Voting should be accessible to anyone that requires assistance when they are voting in person. It is important for legal, registered voters with a photo ID to have the opportunity to vote in person. Under ADA reasonable accommodation should be made, and not limit voters to a mail-in ballot which potentially could be lost or destroyed.

---

Lauren Gerken

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Austin, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 22. My name is Lauren Gerken, and I am a Public Policy Analyst for the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD).

Established by state and federal law, TCDD is governed by 27 Governor-appointed board members, 60 percent of whom are individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) or family members of individuals with disabilities. The Council's purpose in law is to encourage policy change so that people with disabilities have opportunities to be fully included in their communities and

exercise control over their own lives.

TCDD appreciates the committee's commitment to analyzing legislation on voting accessibility in Texas. Voting is one of the most important fundamental rights and acts of independence a person has in the United States. However, many people with disabilities face barriers at the polls that either forces them to rely on others or deters them from voting completely. With this in mind, TCDD adopted "Voting Access" as one of its Public Policy Priorities for the current legislative session.

While HB 22 creates greater access to voting by offering designated parking for voters who cannot ambulate and go into a polling location, TCDD would like to offer the following recommendations for language that will help with implementation and increased access:

- Specify that the two parking spots must be in addition to the accessible parking spots at the polling place.
- Require the Secretary of State to post a notice that these parking spaces will be available. This will allow people who are blind or visually impaired to access the information and be aware of the telephone number, so they can request their drivers to read the number aloud upon arrival.
- Require poll workers to be trained on the addition of these parking spots and how they are expected to interact with the individuals using them.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding these recommendations. Please do not hesitate to reach out to TCDD with any questions, or if you would like any additional information.

---

Jesse Suarez

Rabalais I&E Constructors

Corpus Christi, TX

This makes sense. If restaurants can designate spaces and have legible instructions for how to place an order for food then polling locations can do the same for voters unable to enter facility. There's no need for an election official to interact with a voter to do this and it reduces the need for mail in ballots.

---

Arthur Simon

self, artist

Austin, TX

I oppose this bill, as it does not sufficiently ensure that the parking spaces used for curbside voting are not already taking away from handicap accessible parking spots.

---

Mary Favret

Self

The Woodlands, TX

Propose clause to address the issue of campaign solicitation to the voter waiting in the vehicle. Those locations should have their own boundaries to avoid any campaigning to approach.

---

Kathy Williams

Indivisible TX Lege

Austin, TX

I am in favor of either of these bills, with some combining. I infer from HB 22, that it requires setting aside curbside voting places for all polling places only on Election Day, but only at the main polling place during Early Voting. As an Election Clerk, I see that early voting is increasing and it is imperative that all early voting polling locations be included in this requirement. Especially in large cities, the main polling place can be a 45-minute drive and especially cumbersome for those who require curbside voting. That should be fixed. IN HB 478, I believe the signage provisions and call information should be required.

---